

3.3.2 AGRICULTURE RESOURCES

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<p>In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland.</p> <p><i>Would the project:</i></p> <p>(a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?</p> <p>(b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?</p> <p>(c) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use?</p>				
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Environmental Setting

Contra Costa County is considered one of the fastest-growing counties in the San Francisco Bay Area. The County is the ninth most populous county in California, with its population reaching approximately 1,060,209 as of 2008 (ESRI 2008). This represents an increase of approximately 25 percent compared to the County's population in 1990. The rapid increase in population has resulted in the conversion of agricultural lands to other land uses. The County's land area totals 514,023 acres, 262,352 of which are allocated to farmlands and harvested cropland. The total acreage classified as agricultural land dropped by approximately 39,088 acres from 1984 to

2006 (California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection (DLRP) 2008).

Prime Farmland

The proposed Project is an existing Marine Oil Terminal (MOT) located in San Pablo Bay with the only portion of the Project with any onshore footprint being the vault and 160 feet of buried pipeline located in the city of Hercules. The onshore portion is zoned as public or open space lands. There are no lands designated as prime farmland on or in the immediate vicinity of the proposed Project. The nearest Agricultural Preserve District (A-4) zoning designation, which is applied to lands covered by a Williamson Act contract, is located more than 2 miles east of the onshore vault and pipelines in Hercules (Contra Costa County 2008).

The locations of potential marine contractor onshore facilities have not been finalized, though companies with locations in Vallejo, Alameda, Richmond, and Oakland have expressed an interest in bidding on the proposed Project (see Section 2.3.5, Contractor's Shore Base). These companies and locations all have existing commercial/industrial facilities, and are not located on prime farmland.

Regulatory Setting

Federal

There are no Federal regulations that pertain to agricultural resources relevant to this Project.

State

Williamson Act

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, commonly referred to as the Williamson Act, enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use, and provides landowners with lower property tax assessments. Local government planning departments are responsible for the enrollment of land into Williamson Act contracts. Generally, any commercial agricultural use will be permitted within any agricultural preserve. In addition, local governments may identify compatible uses permitted with a use permit.

Local

The Land Use and Conservation Elements of the City of Hercules and Contra Costa County General Plans contain goals and policies related to agricultural resources. The MOT is designated as open water in the General Plan, the onshore portion is designated as public (Contra Costa County General Plan) or Waterfront Commercial (City of Hercules General Plan) or open space and is not zoned for agricultural use. The onshore portion is within the County's designated Urban Limit Line, which is intended to limit development and preserve land for parks, open space, agriculture, wetlands and other non-urban uses.

Impact Analysis and Mitigation

Impact Discussion

(a-c) The proposed Project involves the deconstruction of the MOT and an onshore vault, and the abandonment in-place of buried pipelines. This activity does not have the potential to affect agricultural resources and will not result in any long-term impacts to underlying soils for future use. Although no specific shore base has been identified, the several bases available for use are located in existing industrial areas. Therefore, the proposed Project would have no significant impacts to agricultural resources, and will not result in the conversion of any farmland or conflict with existing agricultural uses. (No Impact)